

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated March 10, 2006. Claims 1 and 4 to 8 are in the application, of which Claim 1 is still the only independent claim. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for her withdrawal of finality of the prior rejection.

Claims 1, 4 and 7 to 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent Application Publication 2003/0085968 (Shimizu), and Claims 2, 5 and 6 were rejected under § 103(a) over Shimizu in view of U.S. Patent 4,159,790 (Bailey). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The invention concerns a liquid container for storing a liquid that tends to form a plurality of concentration layers when the container is maintained in a static state, such as when the container is stored or displayed on store shelves. According to the invention, the liquid container includes a hollow tubular member whose one end is connected to a supply port, together with an air introducing port provided at the bottom of the hollow tubular member to introduce air into the tubular member. A liquid supply hole is formed in the tubular member, and liquid in the liquid container is introduced into the tubular member through the liquid supply hole.

As explained in a previous response, the foregoing arrangement provides a beneficial effect in that, as air is introduced into the hollow tubular member through the air

introducing port, it rises as a bubble in the tubular member so as to agitate the liquid inside the tubular member. Thus, as liquid is introduced into the tubular member through the liquid supply hole, this agitation tends to mix the liquid in the tubular member, thereby de-stratifying the concentration layers.

In entering the rejection over Shimizu, the Office Action provided a reproduction of Shimizu's Figure 4, so as to provide an explanation of how the USPTO was interpreting Shimizu with respect to the claims. Applicants respectfully submit that some confusion has been caused by failure of the Office Action to properly differentiate between the claimed liquid supply "hole" and the supply "port". These are distinct structures. According to the claims, the liquid supply "holes" are "formed in the tubular member", as shown in Figure 4 of the subject application and as designated in Figure 5 of the subject application with reference numerals 107a, 107b, 107c, 107d, 107e, 107f and 107g. On the other hand, the supply "port" is for "supplying the liquid to another device"; in the context of Figure 4 and 5 of the subject application, liquid is supplied from the liquid container through ink supply needle 528 which is inserted into the liquid container through connection port 150 and communication hole 153. A marked-up version of Figure 4 from the subject application is reproduced below, with labeling as appropriate:

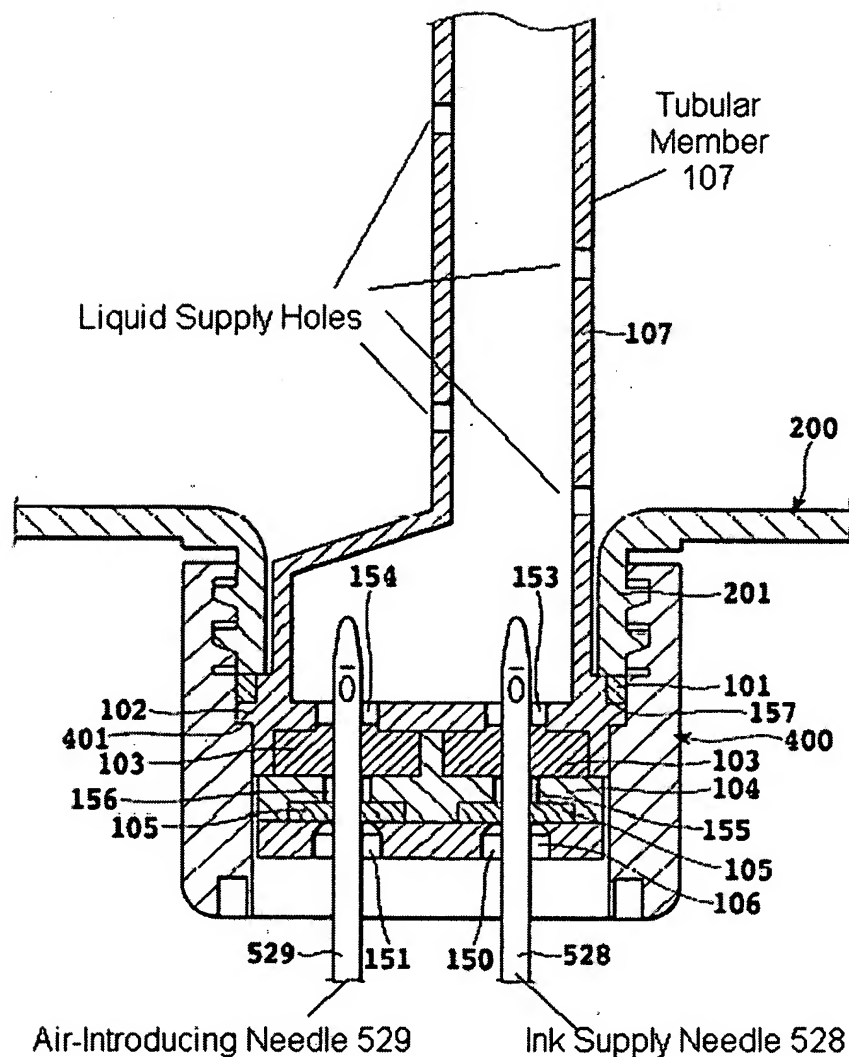


FIG.4

The Office Action took the position that Shimizu's Figure 4 shows a hollow tubular member 102. Given that interpretation, it is incorrect to state that an unnumbered hole (which the Office Action labels as "liquid supply hole") in Shimizu's Figure 4 corresponds to the claimed liquid supply hole, for the reason that Shimizu's hole is not formed in tubular member 102. Likewise, it is incorrect to state that Shimizu's element

529 corresponds to an air introducing port, for the reason that element 529 is not positioned at the bottom of hollow tubular member 102.

To emphasize the distinctions between the claimed invention and Shimizu even more clearly, independent Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the substance of dependent Claims 2 and 10, so as to specify that there are a plurality of liquid supply holes, that both of the air introducing port and the supply port are located at the bottom of the hollow tubular member, and that the hollow tubular member extends vertically upward from a bottom of the liquid container to a height almost equal to an inner height of the liquid container. These features are all shown in the above reproduction of Figure 4 of the subject application, which is one representative example of an ink container according to the invention.

The patent to Bailey has been reviewed, but is not seen to provide a description of any of the features missing from Shimizu as a reference against the claims. It is noted, for example, that Bailey's hollow tubular member extends downwardly from a top of a container, such that it is not possible for air introduced into the tubular member through an air introducing port to rise as a bubble in the tubular member to agitate liquid inside the tubular member.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that the claims herein are fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa,
California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to
our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael K. O'Neill", written over a horizontal line.

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